

Environmental Information

Arriving aircraft

Bournemouth Airport has a robust system of noise control in place. Landing aircraft are operated sensitively and, in recognition of local circumstances, specific controls are applied to training and circuiting aircraft. We have also benefited from some major improvements in aircraft technology over the past few years. This has greatly reduced aircraft noise and today's modern aircraft are, typically, 20 decibels quieter than those operating 30 years ago.

Every aircraft is under the direction of our Air Traffic Controllers who provide instructions to the pilot. The Airport also records from radar, the track and altitude of each aircraft's operation. This system is known as WebTrak and is available to view on our website: www.bournemouthairport.com.

The potential impact of aircraft noise is an important consideration for Air Traffic Control (ATC) and every effort is made by the Airport's Air Traffic Controllers to ensure aircraft operate as quietly as possible.

Landing into the wind

For reasons of operational safety, it is usual at all airports for aircraft to land into the wind. As the prevailing wind comes from the west, around 75% of arriving aircraft will approach Bournemouth Airport from the east, and 25% will approach from the west.

ATC primarily assess the wind direction and strength on the ground. However wind on the ground can, on occasion, be very different to that higher up and ATC may decide to assess wind direction and strength at higher altitudes. As a result, it is not always possible to rely on the surface wind direction to determine the direction in which aircraft will land.

Arrival routes

Unlike departures, arriving aircraft do not follow defined routes as it is essential for ATC to sequence arriving aircraft to ensure sufficient landing intervals and to allow departing traffic when necessary.

Depending on the inbound route, aircraft coming into Bournemouth are usually integrated with flights operating in, and out, of Southampton Airport and this can affect the aircraft's actual arrival route.

In addition, ATC have to retain the ability to direct aircraft anywhere within controlled airspace in order to maintain safety and efficiency.

Instrument landing system (ILS)

Commercial aircraft will, generally, need to be in line with the runway some 8-10 miles from touchdown at a height of around 3000 ft. At this point they link with the ILS – a series of radio beams and aerials which guide them to a gradual, steady final approach.

The ILS is an extremely sophisticated piece of equipment that gives a 'precise' trajectory of descent. Its accuracy is such that most aircraft have the ability to land 'blind' in poor visibility. Bournemouth, in line with most other airports, has a glide slope of 3 degrees, equal to descending 300 ft per nautical mile. All aircraft using the ILS will, therefore, be at the same height when passing the same point.

All commercial aircraft are encouraged to use a 'Continuous Descent Approach' (CDA) which is considered to be environmental best practice and can reduce noise by up to 5 decibels. (*For more information, see the CDA fact sheet*).

Visual approaches

Whilst the majority of commercial aircraft will use ILS for their final approach to the runway, smaller aircraft will use a visual flight approach which means pilots use landmarks to direct them rather than the ILS.

Use of reverse thrust

In order to reduce speed after landing, aircraft can reverse their engines to apply a braking force. Unless it is necessary to do this for reasons of operational safety (eg if the runway is wet), pilots are instructed to ensure that the use of reverse thrust above low or 'idle' power is minimised in order to further reduce noise.

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